

Numerous forest interior birds were noted during the animal survey of Sand Branch Natural Area, including Seiurus aurocapillus (Ovenbird), Hylocichla mustelina (Wood thrush), Poliophtila caerulea (Blue-gray gnatcatcher), Vireo olivaceus (Red-eyed vireo), Mniotilta varia (Black-and-white warbler), Piranga olivacea (Scarlet tanager), Wilsonia citrina (Hooded warbler), Vireo flavifrons (Yellow-eyed vireo), and Picoides villosus (Hairy woodpecker). These birds are indicative of the unfragmented habitat.

Numerous low-nesting birds were also noted on this site, include Wilsonia citrina (Hooded warbler), Seiurus aurocapillus (Ovenbird), Meleagris gallopavo (Wild turkey), Mniotilta varia (Black-and-white warbler), Pipilo erythrophthalmus (Rufous-sided towhee), and Cardinalis cardinalis (Northern cardinal). Low-nesting birds are especially vulnerable to increased predation due to edge effect which increases populations of predators such as raccoons, cats, dogs, and American crows. Species that nest on the ground or low to the ground are also vulnerable to human foot traffic and recreational activities. An active Seiurus aurocapillus (Ovenbird) nest was noted during the site survey. Also, an Empidonax virescens (Acadian flycatcher) was observed during the animal survey. The Acadian flycatcher favors dense shrub with thin canopy cover, usually in bottomlands with a well developed understory.

The site also provides potential habitat for Crotalus horridus (Timber rattlesnake) and Lampropeltis triangulum elapsoides (Scarlet kingsnake). The seepage areas provide some potential for Hemidactylium scutatum (Four-toed salamander).

There is a 1978 record for Etheostoma collis (Carolina darter) downstream from Sand Branch Natural Area on Spencer Creek. Carolina darter has a North Carolina Status of Special Concern. It occurs only in the central Piedmont in streams in the Yadkin/Pee Dee River and Catawba River drainages.

### **Management/Protection Recommendations:**

Sand Branch Natural Area is worthy of land acquisition through either a local or state land trust or the U.S.F.S. - Uwharrie National Forest. Restoration of the Pinus serotina (Pond pine) and Pinus palustris (Long-leaf pine) natural community would require active management. Timbering is necessary to remove the pine plantation and restore the natural communities. If the site is protected, a management plan is necessary to determine how to restore and manage the site for its exemplary natural communities.